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IN THE DAYS OF VICTORIA. By Thomas F. Plowman. New York: John Lane Company, 1918.

Almost every one who reads has some sort of impression, vivid enough in its way, of the Early Victorian and Mid-Victorian periods. The very terms arouse in one a disposition to smile and to indulge in a kind of whimsical sentiment. Victorian opinions, Victorian taste in furniture and poetry, Victorian notions of respectability, Victorian sentiment—all these, when served up to us in fiction or in reminiscence, we relish with a certain perhaps excessive gusto. There was much, doubtless, in English life during the middle of the nineteenth century that may justifiably strike us as naïve and quaint. We are sufficiently close to this life to feel on familiar terms with it: we by no means regard it as having, like periods more remote, a kind of inevitable and privileged strangeness. The queerness of it all comes home to us, because the Early Victorians were, if not our fathers or grandfathers, the contemporaries of our fathers or grandfathers, and because, with their naïve surprise at the speed of railway trains and all that, we cannot help regarding them as novices in modern life. We, with our automobiles, our airplanes, our wireless telegraphy, and our gigantic war, look back upon the earlier period with humorous appreciation and with sentimental envy.

When we read of such a ceremony as that of "giving the franchise" at Oxford, we seem to see ourselves taking part—as Mr. Thomas Plowman once did—in a very solemn, somewhat absurd, and highly convivial piece of foolery, a survival of the Middle Ages; and this somehow delightfully tickles both our sense of humor and our sense of romance. When we are told of how Dr. Routh of Magdalen College refused to take official cognizance of anything so grossly modern as a railroad, resolutely assuming that travellers journeyed to Oxford in all cases by stage-coach—"The roads, sir, the roads in winter, I do assure you, sir, are very bad at this time of year"—we enjoy the joke almost as if it were related of a contemporary.

The singularity of what we feel to be, despite glaring differences, very near us in spirit—for the atmosphere still lingers and we encounter every day Mid-Victorian people—may partially excuse in us a rather patronizing attitude toward the time of Dickens and Thackeray. But there is more than a trace of exaggeration in all this: too much "atmosphere" obscures reality. A clever writer, like, for example, Ford Madox Hueffer, is sure of his appeal when he discourses in semi-fictional style of the Pre-Raphaelite painters and their contemporaries; but impressionism has its limits—appreciation should sometimes give way to direct perception of truth.

The book, *In the Days of Victoria*, is not the work of a man who has special knowledge of a particular field—Mr. Plowman makes no pretensions to such knowledge—but it is the record of one who has been closely in touch with a good many interests. Books, pictures, journalism, education, politics, the stage, church-going, volunteering—on all these and on several other subjects—of no less interest—Mr. Plowman has something to say that is worth saying. There are some notable narrations in the book, such as the detailed story of Thackeray's venture into politics, and there is a great store of anecdotes, all good.

In its critical comments the book is by no means notable. Mr. Plowman's remarks about Pre-Raphaelite painters, for example, or about the defects of the Victorian educational system, are neither very novel nor very acute; but all that is said is said sensibly and entertainingly, and nothing in this book of Mr. Plowman's comes amiss.

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THE REAL FRONT. By Arthur Hunt Chute. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918.

One of the grimmest of the war-books—a book with an emphatic message for stay-at-homes—is *The Real Front*, by Arthur Hunt Chute, late of the first Canadian Division. The book is by no means pessimistic. On the contrary, it should be to a stout heart inspiring—and only stout hearts receive the best inspiration. But it reveals horror with few softening touches, and it tells the bare facts of fighting without diverting attention to the thrill of successful accomplishment or wrapping up death and destruction in general terms.

From first to last the book gives facts without glamour. Very realistic is the description of the first Canadian contingent on its way to the front—a rough, disorderly set of men, surely, reduced to soldierly obedience only by the sternest discipline, for a willingness to die for the right cause does not instantaneously produce in the mind of the recruit a due respect for authority. No less realistic is the account that Mr. Chute gives of the heroic services performed by these same troops in the field. The author in no way idealizes these Canadian soldiers; he simply tells the facts: and the facts speak volumes both for the splendid qualities of the men themselves and for the mighty, the well-nigh irresistible force of discipline.

It is on the real front that manhood is tested and that the results of discipline are gloriously proved. The real front does not mean merely the trenches; it means the front-line trenches in time of battle. "One might visit the fire-trenches many times," writes Mr. Chute, "and yet never see the real front. The real front is the battle front, which comes and goes. 'Why, there is nothing to dread in the war game,' I announced, grandly, on our first night out. 'I've been at the front in the Balkans and now in France, and I surprise myself at how little of a coward I really am.' That was before I had ever seen the real front. One day, that quiescent volcano on which I had been dwelling suddenly burst into eruption. Out of the trembling earth and the belching fire and smoke, I found that I was still human. My tongue went dry and my knees knocked together, and I found that the real front is a place of mortal terror."

Even the experienced soldier may fail to realize the full meaning of the work that he does or the full measure of the fortitude that may at any time be required of him. As an artilleryman, Mr. Chute did his work methodically with little more than general thought of the results; but after he had had the nightmare trial of wallowing for hours in a shell-hole in the midst of a bombardment, he obtained a new comprehension of the whole sanguinary business of war. Than Mr. Chute's account of this experience nothing could better show the greatness of